

Black Oak

Dog Slaughter Beach

Deep inside the country, he went out for some air
Amid an awful night of eating household objects on a dare
A tea towel, a handful of refrigerator magnets, and a watch

He staggered through the mudroom, got sick out in the street
The towel in tiny pieces, magnetic letters neat
And now arranged in such a way that they should spell his lover
's name
And time was of the essence

The engine turning over, the summons in the shop
He could not recall the number, but he knew it was a lot
His belly warm with drink
He leaned into the freeway in the night

Investigating exit ramps, waiting for a sign
Scanning up the A.M. band, sliding down the vine
He felt his stomach turn again and pulled off at the park
She was standing in the black oak, carving poems in the bark

Planted in the café, her bloodied saber drawn
Marking up the manuscript, hard against the dawn
She turns on the recorder and pulls a nervous breath before she
speaks
"7 A.M. Tuesday, January 9
Realizing this may put my career on the line"
The café man approaches, with a corded phone and tells her
"It's for you"

Somewhere in the static, a disembodied voice
The circumstances changed, she will not have a choice
The line dies, crackles soft, then sputters back to life
"They found him at the black oak, they dug him up last night"

(7 A.M. Tuesday, January 9)
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